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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio talk by Mr. W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered through Station WRC and 32 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, Tuesday, February 18, 1930.

Last week, I gave you the first of a series of lunch or dinner table talks concerning spring work with flowers, and general improvements about your homes. Today, I have something to tell you that is of interest to apple growers, dealers in fruit, house-keepers, and everyone who buys apples.

No doubt, most of you are familiar with the strips of paper scattered through the basket and barrel packages of apples, and I dare say that many of you have asked the question - Why is this paper used? A few days ago, I requested Mr. Charles Brooks of the Office of Fruit Diseases, to answer this question for the radio audience, and here is what he says:

"It is at once evident that the paper may add to the attractiveness of the package, especially if the proper color has been selected, but this is not the real purpose of shredded paper when used on apples. If the paper is properly manufactured and properly applied, it has a much more important function than merely adding to the attractiveness of the fruit.

The strips or shreds in the apple package are not ordinary paper but a specially prepared oiled paper, and it is the oil and not the paper that is of greatest value to the apples. The paper serves as a satisfactory carrier for the oil.

The function of the oil is to prevent the development of scald, a serious storage disease of apples. Prior to the advent of oiled paper, it was a common thing to see apples on the market with brown dead-looking skin areas. In many cases the skin was actually dead and could be readily stubbed off from the flesh beneath. This browning and dying of the skin of the apple is known as scald. It is particularly serious on York Imperial, Winesap, Stayman, Black Twig, and Grimes Golden, but occurs on practically every variety of winter apples. The disease is thought to be due to an excessive accumulation within the apple of the odorous substances produced by the apple itself and oil is known to absorb these odorous substances.

In order for the oiled paper to accomplish its purpose it must be in fairly close contact with the apple. With the box apples this is very nicely accomplished by the use of the oiled wrap. With the barrels and baskets the shredded paper serves as a substitute for the wrap in scald control. To accomplish its purpose there must be about a half pound of paper used to each bushel of apples and the paper must be well distributed throughout the package, making the contact between the paper

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and the apples as nearly as practicable like it would be in the case of wrapping. Large mats and heavy layers of the shredded paper not only prevent the paper from having its full efficiency in scald control but also gives a temporary bridging effect that results in the barrel becoming slack later in the season.

Shredded paper has added greatly to the keeping quality of apples and its value is recognized by the apple trade both in this and in foreign countries; but there are difficulties in maintaining standards of shredded paper treatment and the careless use of the paper sometimes threatens not only its usefulness in the particular lots of apples but the reputation and standing of the whole shredded paper treatment.

One of the outstanding difficulties is the use of small amounts of shredded paper in the face of the package merely for decoration without any mark to indicate that the fruit has not been treated with paper for scald prevention. The buyer sees the paper sticking out of the package and, if he does not distinguish between the decorative and the scald prevention treatment, is deceived both as to the package he is buying and as to the actual value of the oiled paper treatment. The failure of the decorative sprinkle of paper to control scald discredits the whole shredded paper treatment and makes it difficult to obtain the proper premium for the package that has the full amount of paper. If the ^{use} of the paper merely for decorative purposes is to continue, there should be some mark on the container to show how much paper has been used. The buyer should know whether he can depend upon the paper being distributed throughout the package.

Another difficulty that is now threatening the shredded paper treatment is the sale of paper that carries little or no oil. For satisfactory scald control the paper should have at least 15 per cent of its finished weight in odorless mineral oil and 18 per cent or more is desirable. Ever since the beginning of the oiled paper treatment for apples, lots of paper have occasionally appeared on the market that were rather low in oil content, but during the past year a considerable quantity of paper has been sold in Virginia that had practically no oil. This paper is filled with paraffin instead of oil and has been made attractive to the growers because, being largely a waste product, it can be sold much cheaper than the oiled paper. Apples packed in this paraffin paper have gone out into our own markets and into European markets and the reports are now coming back that scald has not been controlled. This condition is resulting not only in losses on the particular lots of apples but in discredit to the shredded paper business in general. Paraffin paper is not suitable for scald control. The paper should carry oil not paraffin.

If shredded oiled paper is to take its proper place in contributing to the reputation of the eastern apple pack, the methods of using it must be better standardized.